



NEWSLETTER

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- Mr. Henderson Patrick

INSIGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear colleagues and friends of West Africa, it is my pleasure to update you on our efforts to support West Africa's development in these very exciting and challenging times. Since our last newsletter we have continued to expand our program in the areas of health, peace and security, trade, investments and infrastructure as well as Agriculture, environment and biodiversity. In each of these areas, we recorded significant achievements, some of which are detailed in this newsletter. Noteworthy among these achievements is additional US Government funding in the amount of \$25 million in response to the high food prices we saw in our region during the year. We are using this additional funding to help develop

efficient regional food markets that can move surplus food production in the region to areas with shortages as well as increase farmer productivity through access to better seeds and fertilizers, two key farming inputs. A second highlight of our efforts this year has been intensive work in hiring new staff, twenty-two so far, for our growing programs in eight countries and especially those in Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso. To further improve our Mission effectiveness, we held a very successful staff retreat and are proceeding to implement key recommendations that came from our staff. We were also able to finally have a Washington driven management assessment of our Mission which we believe has been very helpful in highlighting some of our challenges to our supervisors in heading. Finally, we continue to work with our key regional partners to strengthen regional capacity to resolve some of the regions' intractable problems. We thank you all for your interest and support to the program. Please do not hesitate to contact us for more information on our program by sending an email to hpatrick@usaid.gov

Henderson M. Patrick,
USAID/West Africa Mission Director

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Nigeria's revitalized shea industry builds a market and jobs for many

From the source to market, Nigerian shea producer Jacob Shinka has worked from the bottom up, taking all the steps to success.



Meena Agro Oil's Jacob Shinka connects with buyers from around the world at the New York State Cosmetic Chemists show

'We have woken up the shea industry in Nigeria, and quality people have gotten into the business.'

- Dr. Peter Lovett

In 2005, Jacob Shinka was looking to start a business in his native Nigeria. At workshops organized by the USAID Trade Hub he learned about the processing of shea butter. Three years on, Shinka's company, Meena Agro Oil, is exporting tons of shea butter, creating jobs directly and indirectly that provide incomes to hundreds of Nigerians, most of whom are women.

Shinka's success started with workshops conducted by the Trade Hub's technical expert on shea, Dr. Peter Lovett, a recognized authority on shea in West Africa. "He came to me in a workshop and said, 'I want to be in shea,'" Lovett recalled. "I told him this will take you three years." Three years later and Shinka's company has 18 full time workers and works with over 100 women's cooperatives that collect the raw shea nuts needed to make shea butter, a versatile oil used in specialty confections and in cosmetics. In April, he took an order from a major multinational. In May, the Trade Hub helped Shinka exhibit his company's products at the New York State Cosmetic Chemists show in the United States. It led to contacts with over 60 companies interested in Shinka's shea butter from all over the world.

"The sample we took there was accepted and they liked it,"

Shinka said. "Any butter produced in Nigeria we are sure we can get a market to."

It was not always so, Lovett said. Crude oil took all of the attention for decades in Nigeria and the shea industry collapsed, he said. The Trade Hub's efforts have revitalized it. "We have woken up the shea industry in Nigeria," Lovett said. "And quality people have gotten into the business."

Shea nut exports from West Africa now total an estimated \$100 million, Lovett said. In 1994, only 50,000 tons were exported at an average \$150/ton, bringing in less than \$10 million to the region. Prices have increased – in Ghana; the current average is \$400/ton – as have volumes.

Trade Hub reports, advocacy lead to a major reduction in police stops

The Ghana Police Service recognized the impact of stops on economic development and reduced them by over half. The Trade Hub's efforts are motivating such changes.



Stops along trade routes slow the movement of goods and people, and bribery makes trade more expensive. Reducing both will improve trade

In March, the Ghana Police Service (GPS) reduced by over half the number of stops its officers operate along primary trade corridors in the country. The number of stops fell from 32 to 7 along the primary trade corridor from the port city of Tema in the south to Paga in the north. Truckers also reported that police solicited significantly less money in bribes at the stops.

The USAID Trade Hub's reports on delays and bribery along primary trade corridors in West Africa were instrumental in the GPS decision. The reports have shown clearly the negative impact that police and customs checkpoints have on the region's economic development in terms of time lost and higher costs that transporters bear. The reports go to project collaborators at ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) and UEMOA (*Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine*) to local associations and individual drivers. And the media has reported about the issue, citing the Trade Hub's research.

In Ghana, police officials said increasing economic development was the primary motivation for the reductions. The service made the policy change just after a February meeting of police officials and truckers that the Trade Hub organized.

The reduction shows that the Trade Hub's primary message on its Improved Road Transport Governance project is getting through clearly to policy makers: Efficient transport means more trade and more trade means more jobs and better prices for consumers.

Also in June, the Togolese president directed his government to develop the legal basis for a national program on reducing transport delays and corruption. And the IRTG team completed its fourth report on bribery and delays: Overall, road corruption is down 34 percent across the region.

IRTG began by encouraging drivers to put their paperwork in order and only drive trucks in good condition, carrying documented cargo within load limits. Through dozens of meetings with thousands of drivers at ports and major truck stops and through distribution of booklets showing required documentation, the Trade Hub emphasizes that drivers must follow the rules to reduce road corruption. The research drives the advocacy. And the Ghana Police Service's decision shows it is making a big impact

WELCOME ABOARD



Jeannie Friedmann is the new Regional Health Officer. Her most recent posting was Washington, D.C. where she was a Team Leader in the Population and Reproductive Health Office of the Global Health Bureau. Jeannie holds a Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Maryland, Baltimore, an MPH from UCLA, and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from St. Louis University.



Kevin Sharp is a career Foreign Service Officer with USAID. He most recently finished a year tour in Iraq serving as the Deputy Director for the Office of Economic Growth and Agriculture. Mr. Sharp has previous experience working in West Africa.



Steven K. Ramonas is the Regional Deputy Controller. Mr. Ramonas holds a master's degree in international studies concentrating in East Asian affairs and development from the University of Sydney in Australia and a bachelor's degree in accounting and finance from Worcester State College in Massachusetts.



Aissatou (Aida) Lo is with the Health office. She is a Public Health Specialist with a Masters Degree in Public Administration and 39 years of experience in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of CS, RH and HIV/AIDS programs.



Matt Burton is the new West Africa Trade and Investment Advisor, responsible for trade policy and finance. Matt has a Masters in Development Management from the London School of Economics.



Bertha Baffoe-Bonnie is the Program Assistant to the Program office. Her last assignment was with the American Embassy, Accra. She holds a degree from Central University College.



Jonathan Petko is the Regional Alliance Builder. He holds a post-graduate diploma in International development Studies from the University of Oslo, Norway and Master of Arts Degree from the University of Toronto, Canada.



Priscilla T Ampofo is a Document Control clerk with the Regional Office of Finance Management. She is a third year Administration (Accounting Option) student of the Central University College.



Teamwork Spirit



Julie Nenon is a Program Officer in the Program office. She holds a Master of Arts in International Development from The American University, Washington, DC and a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from University of Richmond, Richmond, VA.



Ron Ruybal works with the USAID West Africa Mission as the Regional Environmental Advisor. Prior to his experience with Peace Corps, Ron worked successfully for 21 years with USAID in several countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.



Jonathan Chappell is a Regional Contracting Officer. He moved to West Africa from his previous assignment in the USAID Regional Mission to Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. He holds a Master's Degree in Environmental Management from Duke University.

PEACE AND SECURITY

STOLEN CHILDHOODS

IN CHAD, RADIO PROGRAM CONFRONTS WIDESPREAD CUSTOM OF CHILD MARRIAGE

(October 20, 2008) Nearly half of all Central African women marry before they are 19, according to UNICEF. Despite public campaigns against child marriage, parents often force their daughters to marry young, supposedly to protect them from sexual harassment and out-of-wedlock pregnancies, as well as to relieve the financial burden of providing for their daughters.

But radio listeners in Chad recently heard another perspective. An in-depth radio program tackled the sensitive issue of child marriages, also known as “thunderbolt marriages.” The program explored risks such as health problems for girls physically unready for pregnancy and a high rate of marital unhappiness and divorce.

The program included an interview with a young woman identified as Madame Dina, who was married at 14. “At fourteen, you’re still a young child,” she said. “I stole my childhood.”

Produced by journalist Frédéric Doumdigao Komba during a weeklong training on issues-based journalism by Internews this summer, the program aired on Radio La Voix de l’Espérance (Voice of Hope Radio) in N’Djaména, the capital of Chad.

An interviewee identified as Madame Naïma said her father forced her to marry at 13. “I am not the only girl to marry so early; almost all my big sisters down to the little sisters have done so,” she said.

Poverty and poor schooling rates, especially for girls, are the main causes of early, voluntary marriages, according to a mother of four children who was interviewed on the program. A father advised listeners that parents should pay more attention to their children’s education, to better protect them against the consequences of an early and failed marriage.

A gynaecologist and obstetrician testified that child marriages sometimes result in permanent health consequences for women. Teenager’s bodies are not always prepared for pregnancies, which often kill young wives, he said on the program.

A representative from the Women Lawyer Association told listeners that according to Chadian law, the minimum age for marriage was set in 1958 as 15 for girls and 18 for boys. The legal age should now be raised, not only for the sake of young women, but also their future children, she said, arguing that it would also help protect many teenage wives from sexual abuse.

Due to the low education level in Chad and lack of access to the Internet, the professional skills capacity of journalists is very low; many do not know how to write well in French or use a computer. The radio program on child marriage was produced under Internews’ community radio project in Chad, which launched in September 2007 to improve the quality of radio journalism by training and mentoring reporters at community radio stations.

Internews’ work in Chad is made possible by grants from the US State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, USAID’s West Africa Mission, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORKING FOR CONFLICT EARLY WARNING AND RECOVERY IN THE MANO RIVER UNION

USAID West Africa provided funding to Computer Frontiers International to create an Interactive Web-based Platform for sharing and exchange of program information between Civil Society and Non Governmental Organizations working on issues of early warning, post-conflict transition and good governance. The Web Site, www.manoriver.org is also being used between the civil society organizations and their constituents of peace building women organizations to communicate reliably and rapidly on early warning issues.

Below is the Home Page of the Web Site:



AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

AGRIBUSINESS AND TRADE PROMOTION

USAID/WA also launched the new agribusiness and regional trade program which will contribute directly to sustainable increases in agricultural growth and rural incomes by focusing on increasing the value and volume of intra-regional agricultural trade in West Africa. This timely award, using cutting edge technologies, will allow the USG to help agribusinesses increase production and trade of food crops, critically needed in the region where civil unrest has erupted in six countries due to rising food prices.

FAMINE PREVENTION FUNDS FOR NIGER

USAID/WA also received approval for the \$5 million Famine Fund activity based on a proposal responding to famine fund criteria for Niger. This fund will complement the MCC's investments in agricultural enabling environment, land and forest regeneration, water management and income growth. Another area of interest is a concerted effort to find areas for increased productivity and trade efficiencies in the livestock sector.

U.S. GOVERNMENT SIGNS \$113 MILLION AGREEMENT TO SUPPORT WEST AFRICAN FOOD SECURITY

The United States Agency for International Development West Africa Mission (USAID/West Africa) signed a multi-year agreement with the Permanent Interstate Committee for the Control of Drought in the Sahel (CILSS).

Deputy Chief of Mission Sue K. Brown witnessed the signing between USAID West Africa's Director Henderson Patrick and the Executive Secretary of the Permanent Interstate Committee for the Control of Drought in the Sahel (CILSS), Professor Alhousseini Bretaudeau.



USAID Regional Mission Director Henderson Patrick, Deputy Ambassador Sue Brown, and CILSS Professor Alhousseini Bretaudeau sign \$113 million Agreement to support West African Food Security

The agreement for over USD 113 million will support enhanced agricultural productivity, food security and natural resources management initiatives in West Africa. The agreement extends U.S. Government and CILSS efforts for an additional five years, and obligates over \$19 million for next year alone. The five-year extension and expansion is one of the steps the U.S. is taking to re-affirm our support to promote food security in four areas: increasing agricultural sector productivity and food security, improving regional agricultural and trade policies, conserving natural resources and biodiversity, and improving water supply and sanitation in West Africa. The activities also support NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program and the U.S. Presidential Initiative to End Hunger in Africa. Non-governmental

organizations, private entities and public regional organizations will be engaged in the implementation of this Agreement. Benefiting countries include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, the Republic of Congo, and Togo.

From October 6 to 10, 2008 USAID/WA attended the regional meeting on food security and agricultural outlook for 2008/09, organized by the Inter Permanent Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) in Praia, Cape Verde. In attendance also at the meeting were representatives for all West Africa countries, regional and international organizations, NGO's related with food security (FAO, WFP, FEWSNET, Sahel West Africa Club, WAHO, OXFAM), France and European Union.

The meeting concluded that the 2008 rainy season was characterized by a normal onset of rains, which fell regularly and were well distributed throughout the season in most Sahelian and West African countries. Crops showed good vegetative aspect until late September and were predominantly maturing or being harvested.

It emerged from the analyses that the cereal production expected at the end of the 2008/09 cropping season in all the Sahelian and West African countries will be generally good. The most probable best-case scenario estimates the cereal production expected in West Africa at approximately **56 million metric tons**. A bumper cereal production level was also expected in CILSS member countries and would be in the region of 18.5 million metric tons. Regarding the specific case of rice, there would be substantial increase in production as a result of the various public and private

initiatives aimed at developing the production chain.

The food situation is still characterized by upward trends in food commodity prices. The main direct impact is the erosion of the purchasing power of the populations, particularly of the poorest among them who find it difficult to access food. These households will further be affected if food commodity prices keep up.

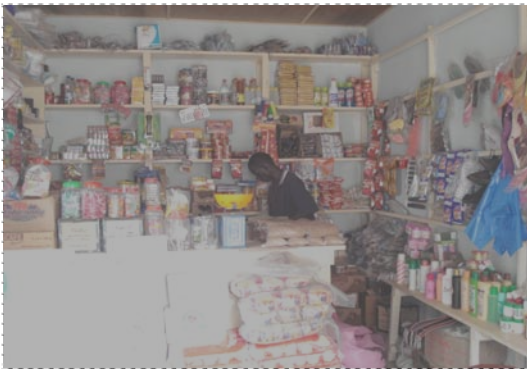
In terms of prospects, the most difficult period, as far as food is concerned, is now over and the expected good agricultural outlook augurs well for increased food availability. However, the food situation will remain precarious considering the residual difficulties in accessing food, particularly among households that are totally dependent on markets and live in remote and inaccessible zones. The Sahelian and West African nutritional situation is still characterized by quite worrying trends, which require improving access to diversified food commodities by the vulnerable populations.



CILSS Professor Alhousseini Bretaudeau, Cape Verde Minister of Agriculture Jose Veiga and Jorge Oliveira at a Regional meeting on Food security and Agricultural outlook for 2008/09

FOOD FOR PEACE

INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES (IGA) IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN SENEGALESE FAMILY



Frank's boutique stocked with goods purchased through access to micro-credit

Micro-credit changing the lives of People living with HIV/AIDS

Frank (name changed) is a former Senegalese emigrant who spent 15 years in central Africa. Married, he lives with his wife and 4 children (1 adopted) in a conservative rural district in northern Senegal where the main activities include agriculture, livestock and commerce. In 2005, Frank discovered that he was infected with HIV. At first this news destroyed him, however, to benefit from free access to ART treatment and medical visits he decided to remain in Senegal and he gave up the idea of returning to Gabon. Since then Frank has remained unemployed and relies on the support of his friends and family who have stayed abroad. Through the USAID funded Food for Peace Title II program, Frank has again emerged into society and now benefits from microfinance funds through a USDA funded program linked to the USAID Title II activity that provides people living with HIV (PLWHA) access to micro-credit loans

to start income generating activities to support themselves and their families.

"I work now and I am not focused on my illness."

In 2005, with the inauguration of the Counterpart International USAID funded Food for peace Title II Program Frank began to receive access to food as part of a nutrition supplementation activity. Frank went a step further and got involved directly with the program to assist with local food distribution to other PLWHA living in his vicinity. To date, Frank is one of the first beneficiaries of the IGA funds made available to PLWHA starting in 2007. In Frank's case he received funds to start a small business, a boutique run from his home, where he sells goods and earns money to support his family. Frank took advantage of his proximity to the local market to develop a business focused on selling foodstuffs. With a loan for \$500 USD Frank outfitted his shop which now has goods and equipment valued at over \$1000 USD.

Thanks to the improvement of his economic power, Frank has a better quality of life. He reduced his stress related to his sero-positivity and he insures his families' expenses. He is active in the local HIV association and has conquered his fears, "I work now, and I forgot everything about my sickness, I am focused on the present." Frank's next step he says is to purchase his own home for his family with his savings.

Frank says that his access to IGA has been a '*breath of oxygen*' that keeps him going every day. In FY 2008 roughly 40 PLWHA began to benefit from access to MFI funds throughout the Department of Podor in the Region of Saint Louis. This program financed by the USAID FFP Title II aims to improve availability of and access to HIV/AIDS care & prevention and was developed in synergy with the USDA funded Food for Progress Program, which provides access to micro-credit funds and training.